3

MERCY TRIUMPHANT;

A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT FETTER-LANE MEETING, LONDON,

JUNE 15, 1800;

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

JOHN OSBORN DAWSON,

WHO WAS EXECUTED FOR FORGERY, AT NEWGATE,

JUNE 5, 1800.

BY WILLIAM MAURICE,

PASTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT CONGREGATION,

FETTER-LANE.

"Κατακαυχᾶται ἐλέους." JAMES.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

BY BYE AND LAW, ST. JOHN'S-SQUARE, CLERKENWELL.

SOLD BY T. CONDER, BUCKLERSBURY; AND BY

C. TAYLOR, HATTON-STREET, HOLBORN.

To be had also at the Vestry of the Meeting House, Fetter-lane.

1800.

[*Price One Shilling and Sixpence.*]

Lately published, Price One Shilling,
By the ſame Author,

THE
MERIDIAN GLORY
OF THE
REDEEMER'S KINGDOM;
A
DISCOURSE
Preached November 13th, 1798, at Spa-fields Chapel, London: before the Missionary Society, at the Solemn Designation of the Missionaries, appointed for the Second Mission to the South Seas.

A

DISCOURSE, &c.

1 TIM. i. 16.—"HOWBEIT, FOR THIS CAUSE I OBTAINED MERCY, THAT IN ME FIRST JESUS CHRIST MIGHT SHEW FORTH ALL LONG SUFFERING, FOR A PATTERN TO THEM WHICH SHOULD HEREAFTER BELIEVE ON HIM TO LIFE EVERLASTING."

THIS is the affecting and gracious language of Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, when approaching the end of life. In writing to Timothy, whom he calls his "own son in the faith," he had in view the recommendation of the gospel of God, the grace of Christ, and the necessity of fidelity in the ministry of the word. He contrasts this gospel, which he preached, with other systems of human invention, to shew its superiority. They are "fables, and endless genealogies, which minister questions,

rather than godly edifying;" whereas, "the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." 'How glorious is that plan which is proposed in the gospel,' as though he might say, 'which commands and effects a good conscience, an unfeigned faith, and a pure heart; a heart filled, yea overflowing with "love," or charity, to God, to angels, and to men! While, on the other hand, nothing is produced by a "swerving" from its truths and fulness, but "vain jangling;" a confused and confusing sound, without those precious fruits and advantages which result from faith, goodness, purity, and love! All arts, all sciences, all religions, opposed to "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," are unsubstantial, vain, and inefficacious; are derogatory to God, and ruinous to man. Even the law of God itself, if trusted in for life eternal, is unlawfully used, and becomes "contrary to sound doctrine."

The Apostle had also in view a clear representation of the grace of Christ: grace in his covenant designs; grace in his visiting the world; grace towards sinners, even the *chief* of transgressors; grace to pardon, and to save from wrath to come, with an everlasting salvation; grace,

grace, which "was exceeding abundant, with faith, and love which is in Christ Jesus." Grace, which stopped our apostle when in his career of sin; grace, which turned his heart to God, and made him the willing subject of the blessed Redeemer; of this grace he became a thankful recipient, and an ardent preacher. "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord," says he, "who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith, and love which is in Christ Jesus." The doctrine of Christ, and of salvation through his blood, is the centre, life, and soul of all the gospel. Therefore, he further declares, that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Christ saves; whom? Sinners. O charming thought! He stooped to earth for this: he bowed his heavens, and came down. He "came into the world" for this. What condescension! What love! This was his errand! This was his design! How wonderful! How gracious! Now, "this saying is faithful." It is true;—the very truth as it is in Jesus. It is a firm foundation for our faith and reliance; a foundation which will never fail the person who properly builds upon it. If so; and if such

grace be manifested in the glorious transactions recorded in this saying; yea, if even salvation itself be the happy result of believing it; surely then, it must be "worthy of all acceptation." Receive it in love, O ye sinners, sunk in sin and misery; receive it, and find, in that reception your pardon, peace, and joy. Let "all," every one of you, accept this faithful saying: let no one reject it, in any land, in any state, in any condition, in any circumstances—for it is "worthy" of all acceptation. Its truth and solidity; its beauty and glory; its suitableness and blessings; its origin and divinity; its subject and aim; all of these crown the saying with worthiness indeed—a worthiness which infinitely surpasses the appretiation of men and of angels for ever. How worthy is this saying which is addressed to and comprehends, not only sinners of the common sort, but also such as Paul once was, the "chief" of them all! How worthy is this saying which inspired him with hopes of mercy, when all human probability of his ever obtaining it was cut off!

He had further in view, in this epistle, to enforce the necessity of fidelity in the ministry of the word of life. He seems to say to Timothy, and to other ministers; 'Be faithful to the trust reposed in you

you. Declare the whole counsel of God. "Shun profane babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called." Preach the cross of Christ. Never lose sight of the grand design of his incarnation and bloody sufferings,—the salvation of sinners. Prove to them that they lie under sin and condemnation; demonstrate to them that it can only be by an interest in what he is, and what he has done, that they can escape from the wrath of God, and become inheritors of his heavenly kingdom. Welcome even sinners like me, of a crimson hue, to the merits and salvation of Christ; urge them to him alone for justification and acceptance with God. You wish them to obtain mercy, preach it to them, in the dear name of our common Lord. Set before them the examples, the patterns, of his love and grace, as well as of his severity and justice. Tell them of me—of me, the chief, the ringleader of sinners. Say that even I obtained mercy. Thus will you answer the ends of your mission, and your ministry will be an odour of life, to every one who humbly receives your message of love.'

St. Paul, in the words of our text, seems full of admiring gratitude and sweet humility for what God had done for his soul. He felt himself a different man from what he had formerly been, both

as to his state and his feelings. He once was living without God in the world. He had not then obtained mercy. He was under the law, and under its curse. But now he has obtained mercy; and is not under the law, but under grace. He was once hardened, and rebellious against God: now, through grace, he is a true penitent. His heart is humbled and broken. His language is become supplicatory; "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And, with adoration, sorrow, and joy, all delightfully blended, he exclaims, "I obtained mercy!" At the same time, looking back, he beholds the apparent OBSTACLES which had been in the way of his obtaining the mercy he found. This enhances and endears the blessing. The difficulties which mercy surmounted, in his case, made the favour of receiving it the more wonderful to himself; while it also shewed its own capability of similar triumphs.

We propose to consider three things:

I. The apparent obstacles in his character to his obtaining mercy.

II. The nature of that mercy which he found.

III. The design of God in this example of mercy.

Great God of mercy, open the hearts of many this day; that, crying out for thy mercy through

Christ

Christ Jesus, they also may obtain it, to their own abundant consolation, and to thy everlasting praise. Amen.

I. Apparent Obstacles.

1. The pride and prejudice of a superior education, not sanctified by the grace of God. It appears that his parents were above the commonalty, and probably of the higher class of society. His father was a citizen of Tarsus, a city of Cilicia, so nearly connected with Rome, that the citizens of the former were dignified with the appellation of Romans. Their children also were "born free," and considered as freemen of Rome, the first city of the world. This privilege, we find, was frequently claimed and urged by Paul, after he had submitted to the sway of Jesus the King of kings. Whatever might be the property of his parents, it is plain they had influence enough to indulge him in a superior education. He was no stranger to the literature of Greece and Rome. "Their own poets" are quoted in his writings, and some of their expressions are sanctified by his application of them, as they now stand in the Epistles of the New Testament, and in the Acts of the Apostles. That he had studied the best masters of eloquence

quence cannot be doubted, when the admirable specimens he has left behind him are examined, and also after the character given of him by the heathen critic Longinus. The finishing part of his education he received in the city of Jerusalem. Here it was in the midst of scribes, rabbies, and doctors of the Jewish law and customs, that he fed luxuriously on Hebrew literature, and "profited more than his equals," at the feet of his eminent tutor Gamaliel. But, alas! he made progress in *pride* also; and, doubtless, often sung with the master of the Roman ode, "Odi profanum vulgus;" I despise the illiterate herd; or adopted the language of the learned among the Jews, who said, "This people"—the common, lowest class—"who know not the law, are accursed." Where grace does not preponderate, or at least make the balance even, pride, from the conceit of superiority, kicks up the beam, and the haughty mortal "knocks his head against the stars." Along with the pride of the Pharisees, he imbibed their prejudices against the disciples of the Lamb of God, because they were chiefly of the common people, nor was the person, character, work, or doctrine of Christ less obnoxious. Thus he sat in the seat of the scorner, and both created and

increased

increased his obstacles to obtaining the mercy of that God, to whom pride is an abomination, and who requires the ready, humble listener to the doctrine of the cross; the blessings of which are as open to the illiterate as to the learned and the worldly wise: perhaps more so.

2. Ignorance of the way of salvation, was an obstacle to his obtaining mercy. But, it may be asked, how could he be *ignorant*, who had so many means of information? Certainly his natural and literal knowledge was great, but his spiritual and experimental knowledge of God was small. Small did we say? that was wrong. He had *none* at all of this kind of knowledge. His own elucidation of this will be the best. When it had pleased God to reveal his Son in him, and to illuminate the eyes of his understanding, then he was best able to speak to this point. He says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This he says to the Corinthians, in a general way of all men; and, lest any should think the Jews were better than others, he says, "Their minds were blinded—even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart."

heart." "Where" then, says he again, as to both Jews and Greeks, the wisest of mankind; "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Verily all men, in a mere natural state, are such as he describes them in another place; "Having the understanding darkened; being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their heart." Now, if God has given the means of knowing his own way of salvation, and men have rejected the light, being blinded, through sin, by the god of this world; does it not tend to their own condemnation, and operate as an obstacle to their obtaining mercy? God gave them not that blindness; sin has occasioned it; and who is accountable for it, God or they? Let us hear what God says concerning this ignorance, as an obstacle to mercy. "It is a people of no understanding: therefore, he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour." That is, dying in this ignorance of God in Christ, they cannot be saved. Hence we infer the necessity of divine illumination in order to salvation.

3. Unbelief was another obstacle in the way of his obtaining mercy. The true Messiah had

appeared.

appeared. He came with his credentials in his hands. He accomplished ancient predictions; he fulfilled the prophecies of old; he wrought appropriate miracles: each of these demonstrated the truth of his assertions respecting his being the Son of God, the Saviour of lost mankind. As such he was worthy of all acceptation: but unbelief rejected him. "They stumbled at that stumbling stone, and rock of offence." The Jews, to whom he came, not only rejected him, through unbelief, but even ventured to vilify his character. They denied and blasphemed him. In this awful conduct, Saul of Tarsus joined them. He would not receive Christ, as the Lord of Glory. He blasphemed him as an impostor. The latter was a direct consequence of the former. And, as a vilifying of the name and character of our dear Redeemer, naturally flows from a rejection of him through unbelief, so we have here united them under the same particular. He was guilty of both; and both he acknowledges. "I was before a blasphemer"—and "did it in unbelief." Unbelief in these our days, though not accompanied with open blasphemy, will as assuredly produce an undervaluing of Jesus Christ as it did in the character we are now considering: and though there may be an outward confession of

his

his being the Saviour of the world, yet there may be no true dependence upon him, in his offices, character, work, and promises; if so, it amounts to unbelief. The heart rejects him. The countenance and conduct are set against him. The one is secret unbelief; the other is inferential blasphemy. To shew what these oppose to obtaining mercy, hear what he says, "If ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins." Again, it is said, "They could not enter in, because of unbelief." And, again, "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."

4. A conduct which called for vengeance, both from God and man, was a great obstacle to his obtaining mercy. Had justice been impartially administered, in the time of his living at a distance from God, he would have lost that life which he had forfeited to justice. He was, according to his own account, "injurious." That is, he did injuries to society; particularly to the followers of the Lord Jesus; contrary to the laws of God and man. His crimes were enormous. Previous to the words of our text, he confesses having been "a persecutor." To see his outrages against society, we must consult the history of the church. It is said of him in the Acts of the Apostles, "Saul

yet breathing out threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of *this way*, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." Such a spirit as this ought to have been checked, in the first instance, by the magistracy, or by those who were acquainted therewith. But, how far he carried this spirit, and his designs into execution, we learn from another passage in his own words. "I persecuted, *this way*, unto death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." After he had known the Lord Jesus, he said, "Lord, they know that I imprisoned, and beat in every synagogue them who believed on thee. And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I was also standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." The crimes of outrage on peaceable society, and even *murder*, are here confessed. Well might he cry, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God of my salvation." Crimes which demand the blood of the culprit, are evidently great apparent obstacles to the obtaining of mercy to eternal life.

5. Another

5. Another barrier to the experience of mercy was a dependence upon his own righteousness. After what has been said of his real character, it almost borders on the marvellous to say that he depended upon what he was, and what he had done, for acceptance with God. Yet the truth of this cannot be doubted. Like all the Jews, he sought after righteousness, but did not attain thereto; because, with them, "he sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law." "For they," together with him, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, had not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." He "was more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers;" who, our Lord says, "made void the law," through them; and substituted the commandments of men for the doctrine of God. The righteousness of the Pharisees, in giving "tithe of mint, anise, and cummin," while "the weightier matters of the law, justice, mercy, faith, and the love of God," were neglected, was his delight, at least, his aim. This was his own, his boasted righteousness, in which he trusted. "If any other man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock

of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." With all his deficiencies; with all his guilt; with all his ignorance of the true spirit of God's word and righteousness; with all his outrageousness in society; he believed himself righteous! How awful! What a lesson! How much jealousy over ourselves, should this instance inspire! Lest, if God should cut us off, trusting in such a righteousness as this, we should appear at his bar with a lie in our right hand!

6. He was not a little sinner, if there can be such an one, but he was the "chief" of sinners. Some think this was an aggravated opinion of himself; and that he ought to have softened the phraseology. It is, indeed, common for awakened sinners to think this epithet belongs to each of them. Each sees his own vileness in so strong a light, as to constrain him to think none could be so bad as himself. God is so pure, and he appears so impure to himself and before God, that he cannot but say, "of sinners I am chief." But Paul speaks matter of fact. He was, in a proper sense, the first of the sinners in his day. He was the most daring in sin. He was the most

zealous against Christ, of any of them. He headed the rebellion against the Lord, and against his anointed. He was the captain, or chief, to lead on to iniquity, in the foregoing respects, thus rushing forward to ruin everlasting. If any mercy be shewn, after the suppression of revolt and rebellion, shall it be to the chief? to him who promoted, organized, and fomented the horrid mischief? To him who set the example, so guileful, so poisonous, to his fellows? Reason and sound policy say, No. How strong is this objection then to a chief of sinners obtaining mercy.

To conclude this part of the discourse; his pride and prejudice; his ignorance; his unbelief and blasphemy; his offences against society and God; his own self-righteousness; and his being at the head of sinners; all formed the greatest apparent obstacles to his obtaining mercy from God.

II. THE NATURE OF THAT MERCY HE FOUND.

1. He obtained mercy. This phrase includes the ideas of pardon of sin, a change of heart, and a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. These he obtained from a merciful and infinitely gracious God. His sins, though many

many, were all forgiven; and his transgressions were all blotted out by a thick cloud. Divine justice ceased its quarrel with him as a breaker of the law of a holy God. The atonement made by the blood of Christ was accepted on his behalf, and the meritorious obedience of the Son of God was reckoned to him for righteousness. Through the Beloved he was adopted into the family of God; and he who had been an enemy to the whole church, is now no longer "a stranger, a foreigner" or "a persecutor," but "a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God." The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ became a father to him; and freely bestowed on him the inheritance of eternal life, with all its fulness and blessedness. He became an "heir of God, and a joint heir" with the beloved Son of God. The Spirit of the Lord was commissioned to prepare him for glory, and to give him the earnest of it in his heart: and the heavenly host, those sons of light, were destined and appointed to minister to this heir of salvation.

But it was also a considerable part of his mercy that he was changed in his heart and ways. He felt the energy of the word of the Lord. When Jesus met him, as he journeyed to Damascus, and said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou

me?" he could no longer resist. He who had been a lion in the midst of a defenceless flock, now became a lamb. The enmity of his heart was slain by the two-edged sword of the Lord Most High. His heart was softened like wax within him, and the lovely image of Jesus, fairer than the sons of men, was impressed upon it. Thus Christ was formed in him, the hope of glory. The love of God was shed abroad in his heart, and the purity of God became his admiration, desire, and delight. Tears of sorrow for his sins, and tears of gratitude and joy for the mercy he had just obtained, doubtless united their streams, fast flowing down a face now beautified with sweet salvation, exhibiting religion in its loveliest attitudes. His views of the Lord Jesus were at once interesting, noble, and endearing; whose titles, characters, and achievements, appeared dignified, suitable, and splendid. His mind dwelt with strong emotions of admiration, pleasure, and praise, upon the ineffable union of the divine and human natures in his mysterious person. He beheld him as every way qualified for bringing many sons unto glory; as the happy medium of all divine communication to men; as possessing the stores of boundless and inexhaustible blessings for millions

lions of sinners; as a person of inconceivable and infinite worth; and as being that to which the soul of a saint clings, as its chief good and only joy for evermore. Hence he was charmed, he was transported at the dear name of "the Lord Jesus Christ." Nothing could satisfy him but Christ. He was willing to sacrifice all to the will and honour of his adored Lord; and to serve him disinterestedly, at the hazard of life and of every thing dear to man. His love to such a friend, to such a master, to such a Lord, swallowed up the love of self, and inflamed his soul with a true ambition. Ambition to conquer the world; not for himself, but for Christ. Ambition to suffer. "I take pleasure," says he, "I take *pleasure* in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." Let us behold the spirit of this man in the following words of his, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but

that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." Admirable language! beautiful and ennobled sentiments! But no wonder, for he had obtained mercy.

2. He obtained mercy notwithstanding every obstacle thereto. This seems to be the force of the particle "howbeit;" ("αλλα.") "But." It is as if he should say, 'I confess the obstacles to my obtaining mercy were very great indeed, yet, after all my sins, and all their aggravations, my offended God is reconciled, is pacified towards me, after all that I have done. I grant it is wonderful, but so it is, I have obtained mercy; I am a miracle of grace!' Mercy shines the brightest after scattering the black shades in which the chief of sinners was inveloped. The strength of mercy appears omnipotent, when it removes such mountainous obstacles as stood in its way to the sinner Paul. Mercy seized its beloved prey, with the swiftness of an eagle, and soared aloft with it to the skies, while thousands stood, astonished, gazing on. When boasted human nature had gone its length to beggar and to ruin itself, in Saul of Tarsus, divine mercy, in an unexpected moment,

moment, poured its immensity of riches into the lap of the needy; to retreive his affairs, to conquer and reign in his heart, and to create a wonder, in heaven and earth, at the incalculable profusion of its adorable goodness.

3. But let us now more particularly attend to the properties of this mercy which he found. The word of God is full of its praises; and the wisdom of God has applied many epithets to it, which are descriptive of its nature. To some of these let us now attend.

The mercy of God to a sinner is sovereign and free. He is under no obligation to shew mercy to any. Considering that all have sinned, and that "the wages of sin is death," what injustice would have been done to any of us, if we had all been made vessels of wrath? What ground of claim have we, in ourselves, or in our works, to the mercy of an abused God? Have we any natural *right* to it? No; by no means. Can we procure it by any thing we can offer to him? Have we money, or have we price, to pay for it? "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering." Thousands of sheep for a sacrifice, ten thousand rivers of oil, and floods of briny tears, are inadequate to the purchase of mercy. God will *give*, not *sell* it. He will give it to whom he

 pleases,

pleases, or withhold it according to his own will. "He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." No design of a man's will, no struggle, even when every nerve is on the stretch, can wrench the blessing of mercy from his sovereign hands. He will have the honour of giving it, in a sovereign way, when it is completely out of the reach of human exertion. Our apostle ſketches this property of it in another place. "We ourselves also were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But AFTER THAT the kindness and love (or pity) of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly, (richly) through Jesus Christ our Lord."

It is also mercy abounding. Though God is sovereign in the bestowal of mercy, yet he is not niggardly. He goes beyond the humbled sinner's highest and widest expectations. Where

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he expected a single drop, there descends the copious shower. Where he hoped to receive an alms of one mite, he finds the collected treasures of a thousand ages, the massy mountain of solid gold. As far as a single step is exceeded by the globe's circumference, or, as high as the heavens are above the earth, even to the illimitable distances of unbounded space, so far does God surpass all expectation when he sheweth mercy. "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy to them that fear him." Thus sang the Psalmist, and thus will every saved sinner sing. We read also of the riches of this lovely attribute and blessing. "We were by nature children of wrath, even as others. But God who is RICH in mercy, hath quickened us together with Christ." The riches of mercy are inexhaustible, yea "durable riches" in the estimation of the wisdom of God itself, which cannot be deceived. O how rich, how happy must that person be, who can say experimentally, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inhe-

inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away!" For him all things work together for good, and life and death are gain to him.

The tenderness of this mercy must not be overlooked. There is a manner of bestowing a favour which lessens its value to the receiver; and, there is also a manner of bestowing which doubles the gift in the esteem of him who receives it, and which endears both the donor and his benefit to the heart. That delicacy in giving which marks the person of true politeness and taste, is eminent in God. He is tender of the feelings of a penitent, and in the design of salvation, as well as in pardoning the guilty, nothing can possibly equal his exquisite sensibility. Did he send his only, his beloved Son, to save a wretched world from sinking altogether into the fiery grave of everlasting death? This was "through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." The poor sinner, who watches for mercy's dawn upon his soul, as those who wait for the morning, will avail himself of this sentiment in his addresses to the mercy seat. He will humbly,

though

though eagerly, say, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness, and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer, thy name is from everlasting." Thus he will fly to the melting pity of a father's heart, and to a tenderness infinitely surpassing the tenderest feelings of a mother's bosom for her lovely babe.

Further, it is mercy given by Covenant. In the covenant of grace, the Lord Jesus is the surety, mediator, and grand repository of all blessings for guilty men. Mercy, among other blessings, is given him to bestow upon the guilty, in that covenant which was made before the existence of earth or skies. God says of him, "I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him." He who was without sin altogether needed no mercy for himself; but as he

was mediator of the covenant, mercy was wanted by guilty rebels, for whom he undertook; it was therefore stipulated for, and granted in this covenant, that it might be sure to all the seed. In consequence also of this covenant, it is mercy everlasting to those who obtain it. This property of it is much celebrated in holy song. "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting to them that fear him." This is the burden and the joy of the song; "His mercy endureth for ever!" This is the chorus after every solo! Here is your security for life eternal, O ye, who, ransomed by the blood of Christ, have fled to him, with breaking hearts, as to your only refuge and hiding place!

III. The design of God in this example of mercy.

God is infinitely wise. If a wise man would certainly act upon a plan, and with a design, in what he does, in order to attain a proposed object and end, surely much more will a being so comprehensive in knowledge and wise in counsel as Jehovah is, act according to a fixed design to accomplish a certain end. He never changes his plan, from a momentary impulse, like poor, weak, bewildered mortals, who know not

what

what a day may bring forth. As God knows all things that shall ever happen, in all parts of his wide dominion, so he is able to execute a variety of purposes by one individual act. He can make one circumstance produce another in infinite progression, till at last every one reaches its destined end in the ultimatum of his designs. As a stone cast into water, by one single and immediate stroke, creates circle after circle, till the whole surface is agitated; so the lighting down of the arm of the Lord of hosts, in one instance, in the moral world, gives a shock more or less, visible or invisible, nearer or farther off, till the concussion is felt to the bounding shores of what he first intended. Here is a merciful and gracious act of the God of Jacob, in the calling and conversion of the chief of sinners. This was from a noble design in the divine mind, and to promote ends which were glorious and benevolent. Let us enquire what they were.

1. He designed hereby to display his own long-suffering, forbearance, and patience. "That in me Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering." He had noticed the rankling enmity of Saul's heart; the wilful, and obstinate resistance he had made against the lawful authority of the great Immanuel: and the tyranny

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he had exercised over the consciences of those who were only accountable to God for their religious sentiments. Pharisaical pride had provoked the eyes of his jealousy. He had in vain exhorted this man to yield up his heart to him. He saw the attempts of this young disciple of Gamaliel to wrest the sceptre out of his own hand, and to blot out the name of Jesus from the earth. He had seen the affliction of his dear disciples, and had heard their groanings, from their houses and dungeons, where the cruel hands of Saul were driving the iron into their very souls: nor was the mingled blood and tears of his dear martyr Stephen yet forgotten. Had he no power to resist the inroads of such a wolf as this, making havock of the flock? Had he no wisdom to circumvent this foe? no snare in which to entrap him, and shut him up in darkness, infinitely thicker than that which reigned in Judea's dungeons? Had he no sense of his own insulted honour? Mighty Conqueror, arise! Brandish thy triumphant sword, and make it drunk with the blood of Saul of Tarsus! Seize, O Lord of Hosts, the thunderbolts of flaming wrath, and drive his soul to everlasting death and hell!—But, stay! I think I hear a gentle voice say, "*No:* This is a vessel of mercy." Ah! Lord, I now perceive thy design.

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It is glorious. I see thy honour in thy forbearance. I behold thee glorious in thy long suffering. My own weakness appears in my readiness to lay hold on vengeance; thy strength, thy power, thy goodness are displayed in waiting, till the proper time, with "all long-suffering!".

2. This example was given with a view of exhibiting mercy as a specimen, or pattern, to all following ages. In this example we may see what mercy is. Here we contemplate what it can do, and how far it extends. Here we behold its loveliness, its beauty, its desirableness, and its triumph. Or, if we take another allusion, here is an earnest of what it is in itself, and what it will prove at any future period. As the painter makes the dead canvass blush with the similitude of living beauty; as the dexterous statuary softens the rude marble into symmetry and graceful form; as the skilled mechanic proves the force of his machine by his nicely formed model; or as the tradesman shews the quality of goods by a fairly selected sample: so, in this instance, the Holy Spirit delightfully exhibits the form, the proportions, the powers, the qualities, and the advantages of mercy divine. Its beauties never fade; its just proportions never alter; its power never fails;

its qualities never vary; its advantages are infinite. Mercy like this, and thus exhibited, is every way calculated to arrest attention; to raise admiration; to excite desire; and to inspire the penitent, though chief of sinners, with hope, with love, with joy, with praise. A proper view and sense of it will have a greater tendency to humble and to break the heart, than any kind of punishment displayed in its most terrific form. This apostle therefore, ever united "*the Trumpet and the Harp*" in his ministry *. The shrill clarion was unison with the melting music with which mercy softens the adamantine rock, and soothes to harmony the dissonance of guilty fear. Lovely specimen, let me view thee! Charming melody, let me listen to thee, till my heart dissolves in undissembled grief!

3. The design of God in this example of long-suffering and mercy, was also general usefulness. It would have been worthy of himself, if he had confined it to the advantage of the person thus eminently benefitted by such a dis-

* This allusion is made, partly, to two excellent Discourses, with the above title, lately published by my worthy and honest friend, the Rev. George Jerment, Minister of the Scots Seceding Church, Bow-lane, Cheapside, London.—Sold by Conder, Bucklersbury.

play

play of his superabounding goodness. His aim was, however, far more extensive. He planned an universal good in what he did. When examples are made, either in vengeance or in mercy, they ought to look beyond the present victim, or the present subject of lenity, restoration, or advancement. So God, in this instance, embraces more than one object. He means, hereby, to draw many from the error of their ways, and to save a multitude of souls from death. Who can tell how many have been encouraged by this example? How many thousands have received comfort from this pattern? How many of our fellow sinners have gone to glory relying on the mercy which was so eminently experienced by one? Considering this, is it not an injury to community to conceal particular instances of the mercy of our God and Saviour to ring-leading sinners, after such a blessed and efficacious example? We only throw out the question, let others answer it. The language of our text, taken altogether, is to this effect, " Alas! I had made myself vile, both in the sight of God and man! My sins were very grievous, and very heinous. I confess it, with an overflowing heart of sorrow. I knew not that I was in such imminent danger, from my transgressions; but God awakened me, the

chief of sinners. He caused me look on him whom I had pierced, and mourn. He gave me, guilty rebel, he gave me the tokens of mercy in my heart. O what shall I do for his great name? How shall I spend and be spent to his glory? How shall my guilt and my mercy be so made known as best to promote his glory, to advance his kingdom, and to save the souls of my fellow men? Glory be to his love, to his mercy, to his grace; he anticipates all my designs of publishing this mercy to criminal transgressors! He has made me, even *me*, an example to all mankind! My pardoned sin, my obtained mercy, shall not be lost to coming ages. They shall join with the angelic host, with me, with the myriads of ransomed sinners, and sing, "Now unto the King immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever! Amen." O God, how admirable are thy specimens of mercy, and thy designs in shewing them to sinners! May each example fill the universe with sounding praise!

You, to whom these words are addressed, what are you? Recipients of mercy, or children of wrath? This question must be answered at the bar of God. How well is it to be enabled now to say, "I obtained mercy." How different is this to the sorrows of the second death,

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vented in ever heaving sighs, and in the language of eternally gloomy despair, 'Woe is unto me! I never shall obtain—no, never—never shall obtain mercy!' Consult the mighty difference betwixt "the wages of sin and the gift of God." No contrast so great! No risk so full of serious venture! No profit and loss can equal this! Let this momentous business be settled first of all; and if it be settled in your favour, esteem every thing else comparatively mean. Shielded in security itself, march on, and keep your heavenly way. The difficulties are trifling: The end will be glorious. The long suffering of God our Saviour is displayed in your characters; divine mercy appears glorious in your pardon and conversion; and your gracious admittance into the regions of light will add to the immense mass of evidence, that this God "Man," Jesus Christ, "receiveth sinners," of whom, in your own way, each will appear to be "chief." But, should these warnings, these encouragements, these examples fail, with respect to any of you, what remains? "A fearful looking for of fiery indignation," roused and heated to seven-fold vengeance! Mercy received is the crown of blessedness: mercy abused is that additional weight which grinds you to powder. Mercy rejected, closes the gates of hell upon you, for ever: mercy

 received,

received, through Jesus' blood, opens for you the gates of the celestial city. If mercy, at last, join to condemn you, alas! you are ruined! you are undone! But if mercy be on your side, you are saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation!

LET us now proceed more particularly to the ſubject which we wish this day to improve, I mean the untimely death of *John Osborn Dawson.* Not having had the least acquaintance with him till a few days before his execution, it cannot be expected I should give a copious account of his character before the time of our first interview. What I shall say respecting him, previous to my first visit, must, therefore, be taken from other sources than my own knowledge; chiefly from a memoir of his own writing, deposited with me. In doing this, it is not my intention to draw a parallel between that eminent man of God, the Apostle Paul, and a criminal executed at Newgate, any farther than as both were sinners, both chiefs of sinners, each in his own way; both as having, I really believe, obtained mercy, notwithstanding numerous obstacles; and both as being, each in his own degree, patterns of the long-suffering and goodness of God our Saviour, to them who may hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

The father of John Osborn Dawson was a

respectable man, and employed under an eminent surveyor in Yorkshire. There is reason to suppose he might have had the countenance of many of the gentry and nobility of this kingdom; but he removed from hence at an early period of life, with his consort, to the West Indies, whither he had been invited by an uncle of Mrs. Dawson, a man of property residing in the island of St. Kitts. There our Dawson was born, July 17, 1774. Providence, however, did not long continue the father to the child, for he left his widow and children, to lament his loss, when under the age of twenty-six. Soon afterwards they embarked for England, where, on their arrival, he was taken by his grandfather, who resided at a village near Bury in Suffolk. Here he received the first rudiments of his education, and here also first appeared that spirit and disposition which wrought at last his overthrow. "At an early age," says he, "a spirit of generosity and humanity marked my disposition, and to such an excess was the former carried, that I have often been severely chastised for it; as whenever I had any money given me, I could never bear the idea of laying it out upon myself, but I must treat with it, as far as it would go, my school-fellows." This greatly endeared him to them, as well as to all

his

his friends, so that his company was peculiarly desirable. At the age of something more than twelve he was sent to a school at Kensington Gravel Pits, kept by Mr. Young, of whose goodness and ability he spoke very highly. Here he remained about three years, when he was ordered to prepare for a voyage to his uncle at St. Kitts, from whom he had great expectations, his uncle having no family of his own. His life, while at Kensington, was still marked by the spirit of generosity we have before mentioned. It appears, by his own account, that he never was a severe student; yet his attainments were by no means despicable, and his education upon the whole may be called liberal. He embarked for the West Indies in February 1790, and was very kindly received by his uncle. He was soon placed on an estate to learn the business of a planter. This he had chosen, because it so much resembled the life of a farmer, to which he was strongly attached. It seems he did not entertain the best opinion of his uncle. Without entering into the particulars of this gentleman's character, there was one trait in it which directly clashed with the leading feature in the character of Dawson. He was penurious to a fault. When a young man, a friend of our Dawson, left the island, he became the superintendent of his uncle's busi-

ness. At this period his company was much courted by the young men of the island. He could sing a good song, which was a great acquisition there. But singing and company were his bane and his snare. He was also obliged to become a soldier. He was in the militia of the island; was often upon garrison duty; sometimes up two or three nights in a week in that unhealthy climate; he acquitted himself well; and received his wages in empty praise. His uncle had occasion to come to London to settle some business; and the chief part of his affairs in the island was committed to the care and management of Dawson. Upon his return from England, and his examination of the accounts during his absence, he found that Dawson had exceeded the sum which he had allowed him by nearly 50 l. which is somewhere about 29 l. sterling at a regular exchange. This gave him very great and serious offence; and though it was explained to him by their mutual friend that this expence was *inevitable*, considering the rise of provisions in his absence, and other material circumstances, yet so great was his love of money, and so severe his disposition, that he never forgave him. Of course Dawson was under the necessity of returning to England as poor as he left it, except in knowledge. He

certainly had expected to have possessed a handsome property on the death of his uncle, but his hopes were blasted and withered away. Upon his coming again to London, he was kindly received by his much respected father-in-law, (his mother having married again) and a situation was procured for him in a mercantile house of great repute in the city. He soon afterwards heard of the death of his uncle, who, though he left several legacies to other branches of the family, cut his nephew off graciously with five shillings! Speaking after the manner of men, and according to human probability, had this man possessed the forgiving temper of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Dawson might have been yet living, and placed in a situation superior to any temptation to the crime of forgery. It is painful to see passion carried to the grave; more painful still for a near relation to sink the rising prospects of a lovely youth into everlasting night, for the value of nine and twenty pounds! Paltry sum! let me blot thee out of my memory to eternity! Or, whenever I hear thee mentioned, let me silently execrate thee, for Dawson's sake! Yet, doubtless, God over-ruled even this, eventually for his good.

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The generous spirit which he possessed, as already noticed, never left him, but increased still more and more to a foolish and guilty excess. An unbridled, yea almost unbounded liberality, far beyond his regular means of supporting, was the consequence thereof. To such extravagance was it carried, that game, poultry, fruit, toys, wine, &c. &c. were almost continually pouring in upon one friend or another, as presents from him. He lamented to me that, in order to keep the minds of his friends quiet in receiving his presents, he had often been guilty of the sin of lying, by assuring them that what he gave them were presents to himself. What I have further to add, to the time of my first visiting him in Newgate, shall be given in his own words.——" I entered," says he, " into the associations at the commencement of their being embodied, which was the forerunner of my present unhappy situation. It led me much into company, and my singing a good song only contributed to ruin me. My company was more courted than ever. Consequently, expense ensued. Yet I did nothing to gratify myself particularly, so much as to make presents to some one or another. If I went into a man's house three times, I could not go a fourth unless I took or sent him some-

something. My heart was ever open to distress, and the misfortune which has occasioned my death has arisen from two causes; a deference too unguarded to the ambitious and expensive display of loyalty, and a generosity and sympathy too unbounded. The fatal money was destined to a project, which had it been accomplished successfully, might not only have concealed the means of effecting it, but have worked the happiness and prosperity of many. As it failed, it has involved me, and those I love, in calamity. Bacon, in one of his Essays, says, "In charity there is no excess, neither can angel or man come in danger by it." Alas! I find it otherwise to my cost. I sought to relieve those I knew in need of help. I missed my aim, and lost my life! Let this hitherto hidden circumstance be remembered. My conduct in the *last act* is dictated by a devotion to the feelings of those I love. In proportion as the world becomes nothing to me, those I have an affection for in it, and am about to leave behind, are more and more the objects of my tender concern and entire devotion. These are the reasons which have caused my ignominious death. They will, therefore, be assured I have consulted their feelings and comfort in all I *now* do. Such is my duty, and so powerful is

my sense of it."—This account was written the evening before he suffered. I am fully persuaded he did notintend to deceive me; consequently I take his own account to be true; but what he intended particularly to do with the money I know not. I did not ask him, as I wished to have no secrets laid upon my mind.

I now come to that part of his life which became the most interesting to me. It appeared that God had laid the eternal concerns of this young man upon the hearts of several serious persons, one of whom is a member of this church. They had taken pains to get several ministers of the gospel to visit him before I saw him; and for whose visits he always appeared to be thankful. Through my friend I was introduced to him on the Lord's day morning before he was to die. God excited the most earnest longing in my soul for his salvation, immediately upon my seeing him. I felt a love for him far superior to fraternal affection. My soul was lifted up to God, saying within myself; "O Lord, I pray thee, send me good speed this day;" and I have reason since to believe that my prayer was heard. He expected that I should have preached to him a regular sermon. I preferred conversation; and pressed him, with much affection, to unbosom himself to me without

without reserve. His heart soon met mine, and to the parting moment we were the truest friends.

The nature of the crime of forgery was our first topic. His view of the criminality of it was clear, both as it was a sin against society and against God. He never tried to palliate its guilt. Sin in general was our next. He not only admitted that he was a sinner, in a common way, but his soul seemed to be labouring under the burden of his guilt, and trembling at the painful idea of appearing at the bar of God; while, at the same time, now and then a faint hope of mercy sprung up in his mind, which again yielded to the terrors of God. I have been told that previous to this visit he was almost distracted with unutterable apprehensions of eternal misery; and he himself assured me that he had formed a plan for committing suicide. Several passages, which appeared proper on the occasion, were suggested to my mind, upon which I was enabled to descant with a peculiar and uncommon readiness. The nature of the covenant of grace, the person, offices, and work of Christ, especially now he is exalted at God's right hand; together with such feelings as renewed persons have; occupied our attention the greater part of the time. He seemed to

hear

hear like an interested man, and to receive the word with all readiness of mind. Now and then, when any thing particular to his case was suggested, his eye meeting mine sparkled with joy, and was instantaneously filled with the beautiful tear of genuine sorrow before his God. Hypocrites never weep like Dawson. He never strove to weep. His mind was too great to aim at squeezing out a lying tear. His tears always flowed most when his hopes began to rise upon the merits of his dying Lord. Happening to mention this saying of Abram's, "Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?" he quickly saw its beauty and force. I explained the manner in which God satisfied Abram's serious enquiry, and how God satisfies the souls of enquirers after their interest in him now, by giving the earnest of the spirit in their heart, and what that was. He had now a new train of thought. He turned within himself to examine, and said, "Now I have hope; I think it impossible to feel what I do for my sinfulness before God, and my desire of salvation through my Saviour, if the Spirit of God had not influenced my heart thereto:" adding, "he thought he might humbly say he had been born again in that prison; for divine and eternal things

appeared

appeared in a light quite new, and affected him in a different way since he came there." After giving him the best advice I could, I prayed with him, and retired, promising, at his request, to see him every day to the end of his short course. Many prayers were offered up, with tears, by a number of Christians that day; so that it could not but strike us as being somewhat singular. The next morning I found him calm and composed, relying on the grace of a merciful Redeemer. Our conversation was very interesting; and convinced me, more than before, that God had visited him in mercy. One saying of mine, however, rather startled him. I told him that there was one thing which he had forgot, which was absolutely necessary, and of greater magnitude than the salvation of his soul; namely, the worthiness of Jesus Christ to be for ever glorified, and to be beloved infinitely above ourselves. This led us to consider the views and employment of the heavenly inhabitants. I dwelt upon that text for some time, while his whole soul was wrapt up in the delightful theme, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." This subject set all his passions in a flame. He

seemed

seemed to himself now to have entered the interior of religion; and it appeared to his mind adorned with infinite beauty and loveliness. His taste was gratified, and his heart expanded. He had before thought religion and an interest in Christ *necessary*, but now it had heaven in it to him; he longed to see infinite beauty and glory in the Saviour's face, and to enjoy the sweets of conversation with eternal wisdom in his adorable person. He now wished to bow before the sacred throne, perfect in holiness, and to rejoice in the presence of supreme excellency in God. The following day was a very comfortable one indeed to him: he was all life and joy. The idea of the resurrection of the body gave him the utmost pleasure, so that he triumphed over death and the grave, as he had before done over hell, through Jesus the conqueror of them all. But, as the whole conversation of each day can by no means be fully related, it may suffice to give the state of his mind each evening, from Monday to the day of his death, from his own letters to me. They were sent for the purpose of relieving the anxiety of my mind on his account; as well as to intimate whether another visit on the same day was indispensibly necessary.

"My

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"IT is true you have not left me long; a few hours only have we been apart—but I wish to see you again already—it is however natural to wish for the society of those from whom we derive the most comfort and pleasure. Indeed, my dear Sir, *I never* from so short an acquaintance, have ever felt so sincere an attachment for man, as I have for you at this moment—nor have I ever so highly estimated the great privilege of repentance, as since I have had occasion to take hope and comfort in my miserable confinement. I feel *great*, and I trust *just*, *hopes*, that he who came to seek and to save the chief of sinners, has *sought*, and will *save me*. Notwithstanding the gloomy and affecting predicament in which I now stand, it is much preferable to the time when, although in possesion of all the pleasures (or rather follies) of this world, I was estranged from my great and Almighty God, and continually tormented with the pangs of conscience, and the apprehension of punishment; from which, through the mercy of God, and sincere repentance, I trust I am in part free, and shall shortly be wholly so, to join in adoring that merciful Being, who, though dwelling in the highest heavens, yet regards with peculiar com-

placency the humble and contrite heart; and who hath in his word assured us, that "there is joy in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." Our mutual friend Mr. U. called upon me soon after you left me, and as he cannot possibly see me tomorrow—let me entreat you will if possible *favour me* with another visit at the usual time. Had I not derived much comfort and instruction from your conversation I should not ask this. I trust your health will permit you again to see the afflicted, at the time before mentioned.—Your good wife, who though I am not acquainted with, I beg to be remembered to in the kindest manner; and in hopes of seeing you tomorrow—believe me to be, dear Sir,

Your affectionate friend in Christ,

State Side, Newgate.
June 2, 1800. JOHN OSBORN DAWSON."

The following evening he wrote thus:

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,

"OUR mutual and good friend Mr. P. has not left me long—his joy at seeing me so composed and resigned appeared to an excess—this has given me additional and secret

pleasure.

pleasure. There are many in the world, who, were they to see me, would be pitying my case; perhaps think me too miserable a being to look upon; and say, 'Thank God, I am not in his circumstances.' Oh! but that would be because they know not my inward thoughts; they who would thus express themselves are strangers to the joys of my soul. I have peace within—that peace which indeed none but God can give. What would become of me without an interest in Christ! Oh! none but Christ can save me—his boundless goodness and unfathomable love have *reached*, and I trust will *save me*. Excuse, my dearest friend, my saying more, as I have a person just come to take his last adieu of me. Our time is short here, but we only part, I hope, to meet again soon in everlasting joy. Commend me to your good and kind consort, whom I expect to see on the morrow. Until then, God of his infinite mercy keep, protect, and bless you both, and also your young ones, is the fervent prayer of, my dear friend,

Your's affectionately in Christ,

June 3, 1800. JOHN OSBORN DAWSON."

The next letter was the night before his death; in which he thus expresses himself:

" My dear Friend,

" AGAIN I sit down to tell you what I feel, and will begin by saying, that though death is not a desirable companion, yet, as we are to meet his sting tomorrow, it does not appear to me to carry that dread with it, that I some little time since thought it did. I am about to enter a country I am unacquainted with, where I shall be eternally happy or everlastingly damned—the former, what a pleasing thought! the latter, how horrid! Through sincere repentance and a firm reliance on our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are promised forgiveness. My most unfeigned repentance I have put up to him, and I hope and trust it will be accepted by him, that I may enjoy the blessings promised by his heavenly Father. It occurs to me that on the morrow I shall say, as Abram did, " Lord God, how shall I know that" (through sincere repentance in Jesus Christ) " I shall inherit it?" (I shall be saved?) To thee, my God and Saviour, I commit and commend my soul: 'tis thine; thou hast redeemed it. It has just occurred to my mind, that you may wish to be satisfied that I die in a steadfast faith, and that I hope to be accepted by our blessed Saviour, to enjoy with him

him everlasting life. In that case, turn over in your mind what sign you would wish me to give you just before I am launched into eternity, and it will I doubt not be done. I feel myself somewhat fatigued, excuse then more at present—but commend me to your good wife and family, and I am, as before, my dear friend,

Your's affectionately in Christ,

June 4, 1800. JOHN OSBORN DAWSON."

Besides these, he wrote several other letters to other friends, which I doubt not breathe a like spirit. He took every opportunity of preaching faithfully, to all who came in his way, "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," so that several of his former companions heard the word of the Lord through him. The souls, also, of his fellow sufferers (for seven others were executed with him) were much upon his heart, so that he could not be easy till he had sent, more than once, to them, respecting their preparation for eternity; and he made a point of praying for them also.

The fatal day arrived. I was in the court, adjacent to where he was confined, at five in the morning; and heard him and the person who slept with him

him closing their morning service with singing, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," &c. On entering I found him in a sweet frame of mind; serene, and unclouded. "Good morning, my dear Dawson," said I, "how is it with you now?" "Very well," replied he; "I am happy; I verily believe this will be one of my best days, and that as my day is, so my strength will be." After shortly dispatching all his temporal matters, we betook ourselves to prayer. It was a solemn, and yet a delightful season. Prayer was sweet and reviving to us both. We breakfasted about six, and our conversation was very pleasant. He repeated some hymns which he had selected, with strong emphasis. I shall never forget the manner in which he repeated these three verses out of a hymn of mine; supposed to be the language of a glorified spirit in the presence of Christ:

"That blessed One who fills the throne,
And shines with matchless splendor now;
Whom majesty and light adorn,
And seraphs at his footsool bow;
That glorious Jesus whom I see,
Stoop'd down to earth, and dy'd for me.

"'Tis he who fills all heav'n with joys,
And smiles eternal spring around;
Who ev'ry heav'nly mind employs,
And blesses all the happy ground;

Who

Who came from heav'n my soul to free,
Bow'd his dear head, and dy'd for me.

" O! how I love that glorious Lord,
Whose beauties charm my ravish'd heart;
Worthy to be belov'd, ador'd,
Is he who bore, for me, such smart:
That I might have felicity,
He groan'd, he bled, and dy'd for me."

Another of his favourite hymns was that upon mercy, beginning with,—" Thy mercy my God is the theme of my song"—and his repetition of it determined my choice of the passage of scripture which we have been considering. He had also, he told me, been recreating his mind with " Vital spark of heavenly flame"—as well as many others which we need not name. At breakfast he said, " How many there are, who, if they knew of our being here together, upon such a business, would expect that I should be in an agony of distress; and that you would be as gloomy as death, upon this occasion. Blessed be God, there is no necessity for either the one or the other. I never enjoyed a breakfast like this." I had often talked with him about the manner and spirit in which he should die. It had occurred to me, that the example of our Lord would be the best,

though

though we did not forget others. I had frequently urged him to think of the lamb-like spirit in which the blessed Jesus went to an ignominious and violent death; and to connect that thought with the design of his death. We had both frequently repeated those words, "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb, so he opened not his mouth." Lest this should be mistaken by any person, let me again say, it was in reference to the MANNER in which I wished him to die; not that he should consider his own death as a sacrifice, in any sense, except to the justice of his country. In order to this we read the history of our Lord's sufferings, and then again addressed a throne of grace. My heart was much led out for him. I desired him to pray. It should however be remarked, that he had never been accustomed to pray at all, in any way, till he went to prison—and certainly must feel embarrassed, in attempting to pray *extempore* in the presence of a minister; yet he readily engaged. His prayer was composed chiefly of short sentences, shot up, if I may so speak, like darts to heaven. It was comprehensive and plain. He by no means confined his prayer to himself. He remembered the souls of his relations, his friends, his fellow sufferers, myself

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and others, and prayed that God would graciously sanctify his death to the conversion of many. We continued thus employed till he was called out to go to the chapel, where the Lord's supper was to be administered to as many of them as desired it. We had afterwards, till the time of knocking off his fetters, much agreeable conversation, which was an earnest to me of his dying well. He bore with composure the bustling scene of preparation for the execution. His frame of mind during the tying of his hands was blessed, and appeared to me to have something heavenly about it. We walked some minutes with the others who were to die at the same time, which both of us employed in speaking to them about the state of their souls, and giving them a word in season. At last the bell tolled for execution. He had before observed, "I think if I shrink at all, it will be at the tolling of the bell." He heard it, however, without dismay; and said, "There is the bell, but it has no unhappy effect on me; the Lord, I firmly believe, will not leave me, even to the last." He went along praying. When waiting in the vestibule, till the executioner was ready, he began to chant, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according unto thy tender mercies blot out my transgres-

sions. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." This last verse I had taken occasion to explain to him, and in repeating it he kept his eye on mine, smiling, to make me sensible he had not forgot its interpretation. At the time of chanting it, he was moving to the scaffold. I was rudely prevented going with him, as he desired. When he observed this he returned to the hatch, and putting out his hand to receive mine, said, "Well, never mind it, God will support me without you, and we can part here as well. Farewell. We shall soon meet in a world where we shall never be separated. Now to convince you that I am quite myself, and know what I am doing, my mind is full of the sufferings of my Lord; and I wish to die like him. As a lamb! As a lamb! As a lamb to the slaughter!" He had then a smile upon his countenance, and with that smile he appeared to the people. Perhaps that might be the reason why some said he died "with unconcern." It was so stated in the newspaper called the Times. I wrote to the editor upon the subject, and received a promise from one of the proprietors of its being contradicted, but I believe it has not yet been done.

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He smiled, it is true; and well he might, for he had "obtained mercy." In this spirit, and with these views, he was launched into eternity! Fare thee well, my dear Dawson; as long as I can think, I'll think on thee; and embalm thy memory in my heart!

So fell one of the sweetest of the British youth. No life could be more desirable, but it was forfeited by sin, beyond a hope of recovery. Yet though his natural life was taken away, I verily believe that he is amply compensated in the bosom of his God.

Here then is another example of mercy for a pattern. O let us look, and love, and desire. We are all sinners, and stand in as much need of mercy as he did. "Let us come, therefore, to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Chiefly you who associated with him, or you who were his relatives, when he knew not God, this is a loud call, and a solemn warning for you. Flee from sin in time. Consider the wrath which hangs over your heads, while you continue without an interest in Christ. See, the God of love calls you to his mercy in his Son. O! that like Paul, you may become obedient to the heavenly vision, and fly to him with breaking hearts! Remember it was the dying request of

your friend that you should; it was his prayer for you all that you might be saved. Your lives are spared; his is cut off: but if yours be not spared for the purpose of seeking after God with your whole heart, and of renouncing the world to walk with Christ, the time is coming when you would rather have been executed with him at Newgate, to have obtained mercy like him, than to have lived a few more years, to die at last the second death!

To conclude; my dear young men, mark the causes which led to the death of Dawson.—Shun them.—Keep within bounds in point of expenditure. Believe in God, whether you grow rich or not, that he does all things well. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all other things will be added unto you." Believe me, when, as a friend, I assure you, there is no solid enjoyment here below, but what is found in a sense of the favour of God. God grant that we, being made the recipients of mercy through the blood of the Lamb, may be received at last into mansions above, into the presence of God, where there are rivers of pleasures for evermore. Amen.

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BRITISH MUSEUM 5 NO72.

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